

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUSHANBE 001701

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/20/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: LAWYER'S ARREST COULD SIGNAL GOV'T TIGHTENING SCREWS ON
DISSENT

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard Hoagland, Ambassador, US Embassy
Dushanbe, State.

REASON: 1.4 (d)

1. (U) Fayzinoso Vohidova, a well-known lawyer and an active member of the Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan (SDPT), was arrested and charged by the Sughd regional prosecutor's office with one criminal act for forgery, and production and sale of forged documents, which includes practicing law with a false diploma from Moscow State University. Media reports and local NGO workers speculated she was arrested due to her political activity. Vohidova was a candidate in the February parliamentary elections until she was disqualified on a technicality. She is being detained while the case is under investigation. Her husband and lawyer have visited her on multiple occasions.

2. (C) Vohidova's lawyer, Bakhtiyor Narulloev, told Frank Hespe, a lawyer with the American Bar Association/ Central European and Eurasia Law Initiative (ABA/CEELI), that Vohidova believes the prosecution is personally, not politically, motivated, because she has won a number of high-profile cases against the local prosecutor's office. Narulloev explained the prosecutor's office threatened to contact over 300 of Vohidova's clients to search for evidence of impropriety. She plans to formally admit guilt in order to avoid such action. (NOTE: According to John Hickey, Country Director of ABA/CEELI, it is possible her diploma is forged; many lawyers practice without legitimate documents in Tajikistan. END NOTE)

3. (C) However, despite pleading guilty, Vohidova maintains her innocence. She believes the Moscow prosecutor's office, which works closely with the Tajikistan prosecutor's office, may have doctored the evidence or pressured Moscow State University Law School to provide false information. She intends to travel to Moscow upon her release to prove her innocence. Narulloev reported Vohidova does not want additional media attention and is urging supporters not to appeal on her behalf through the media. Rather, she would prefer NGOs and embassies to contact the government and prosecutor's office.

4. (U) BACKGROUND: Vohidova has been an active lawyer in the Sughd region since 1998 and heads the Khojand Legal Advice Center. She has written several articles criticizing the government, particularly the regional prosecutor's office. In March 2005, she represented two members of the SDPT from the Resolve District who were arrested and imprisoned on charges of insulting a judge and resistance to authority. Vohidova herself was a leading candidate in the February 2005 parliamentary elections from the Ghaffurov District. However, she was disqualified from the race based on a technicality, for not reporting all of her husband's assets on the registration forms.

5. (U) In addition, she is a member of the Citizens Rights Advocacy Network (CRAN), which is a DRL- funded project of ABA/CEELI. Her NGO, Center for Support of Legal and Economic Reforms in Tajikistan, received ABA/CEELI funding for an advocacy campaign to improve the status of non-citizens in the Ferghana Valley. In the past two months, she has advocated on behalf of those accused in a trafficking-in-persons case.

6. (SBU) COMMENT: Vohidova's assertion that her arrest was personally motivated is plausible. However, her case inevitably sends a message that unauthorized political activism that annoys the powers that be is unwelcome in Tajikistan. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND

NNNN